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# Job Vacancies, Australia

Results of the quarterly Job Vacancies Survey containing estimates of job vacancies classified by industry, sector and state/territory

Reference period May 2020

Released 25/06/2020

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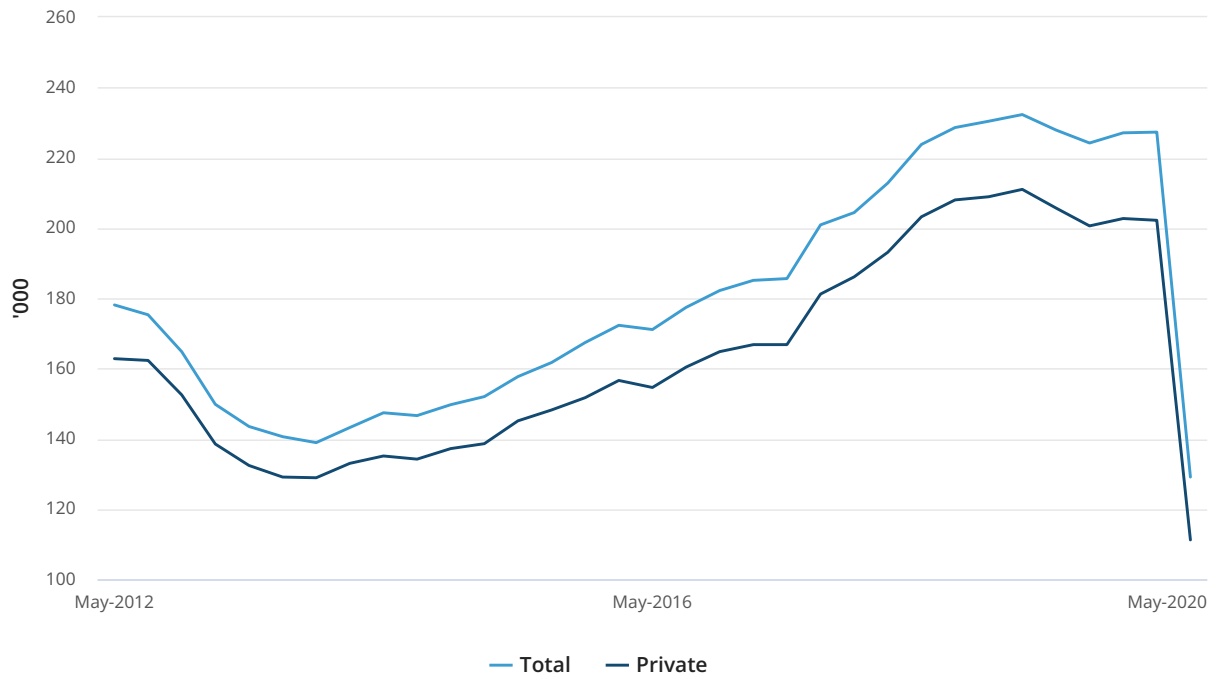
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## Main features

### May key figures

	May 2020	Feb 2020 to May 2020	May 2019 to May 2020
	'000	% change	% change
Seasonally Adjusted Estimates			
Private sector	111.2	-45.0	-46.0
Public sector	17.9	-28.9	-19.4
Private and public sectors	129.1	-43.2	-43.4

## Job vacancies, total and private sector - seasonally adjusted



### May key points

#### Seasonally adjusted estimates

- Total job vacancies in May 2020 were 129,100, a decrease of 43.2% from February 2020.
- The number of job vacancies in the private sector was 111,200 in May 2020, a decrease of 45.0% from February 2020.
- The number of job vacancies in the public sector was 17,900 in May 2020, a decrease of 28.9% from February 2020.

### COVID-19 pandemic

From 22 March 2020, Australia saw the progressive introduction of major social distancing and other business-related restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19. Most of these restrictions were still in effect on the Job Vacancies Survey reference date for the quarter (Friday 15 May 2020). May estimates show significant quarterly and annual change in the labour market.

## **Suspension of trend estimates**

Given the extent of change in the Job Vacancies time series, the ABS has temporarily suspended trend series and moved to using forward factors for seasonal adjustment for a range of series, including some job vacancies estimates. For more information, please refer to; Spotlight: Job Vacancies Survey Methods During COVID-19.

## **Survey responses remain high in May**

Responses for the JVS May 2020 quarter remained high, with similar levels of responses to previous quarters. The ABS would like to thank the Australian business community for their continued support in responding to our surveys during such a difficult time, given how critically important this information is.

## **Rounding**

Estimates of percentage change shown in this release have been calculated using unrounded estimates, and may be different from, but are more accurate than, movements obtained from calculating percentage change using the rounded estimates presented in the Tables and the datacubes in the Data downloads section.

## **Tables**

### **1 Job vacancies, states and territories**

Original										Seasonally Adjusted	Trend
NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia
<b>JOB VACANCIES ('000)</b>											
2019											
February	84.0	64.1	36.6	9.4	27.5	3.0	3.6	6.6	234.7	232.3	nca
May	77.2	60.1	33.2	11.2	23.2	3.3	4.2	6.7	219.1	227.9	nca
August	72.8	61.2	39.1	11.3	26.4	3.6	4.3	7.6	226.3	224.2	nca
November	80.2	60.1	39.2	11.4	25.7	3.6	3.5	7.7	231.4	227.1	nca
2020											
February	79.3	59.7	38.4	11.7	27.6	3.4	2.9	6.6	229.5	227.3	nca
May	39.8	28.7	25.2	6.8	16.8	1.9	1.7	3.6	124.5	129.1	nca
<b>CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS QUARTER (%)</b>											
2019											
February	0.6	4.1	-3.1	-12.5	2.5	-17.8	-5.2	-5.0	-	0.8	nca
May	-8.1	-6.3	-9.3	19.5	-15.3	10.5	15.7	1.3	-6.7	-1.9	nca
August	-5.6	1.8	17.9	1.2	13.6	11.3	3.1	12.2	3.3	-1.7	nca
November	10.1	-1.7	0.2	0.4	-2.6	-0.7	-19.5	2.0	2.2	1.3	nca
2020											
February	-1.1	-0.8	-2.0	2.7	7.3	-5.7	-17.8	-13.8	-0.8	0.1	nca
May	-49.9	-51.9	-34.3	-41.6	-39.1	-45.7	-39.7	-46.2	-45.8	-43.2	nca
<b>CHANGE FROM CORRESPONDING QUARTER OF PREVIOUS YEAR (%)</b>											
2018											
May	9.2	42.2	18.5	9.1	21.8	-7.2	21.8	36.0	20.7	20.6	nca
2019											
May	3.7	-2.2	3.6	-0.9	3.7	32.7	10.5	1.7	2.2	1.9	nca
2020											
May	-48.5	-52.3	-23.9	-39.1	-27.7	-43.4	-58.9	-46.9	-43.2	-43.4	nca

- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

nca not currently available due to break in series

## 2 Job vacancies, private sector - states and territories

Original										Seasonally Adjusted	Trend
NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia
<b>JOB VACANCIES ('000)</b>											
2019											
February	77.3	58.9	33.8	7.9	25.8	2.4	3.1	4.8	214.1	211.0	nca
May	69.6	54.6	30.1	9.6	21.7	2.7	*3.6	4.8	196.8	205.7	nca
August	65.3	55.9	35.3	9.5	24.5	3.0	3.7	5.1	202.3	200.6	nca
November	72.2	54.9	35.5	9.5	23.5	2.9	3.0	5.3	206.7	202.7	nca
2020											
February	71.4	53.7	34.9	10.0	25.4	2.9	2.1	4.9	205.1	202.2	nca
May	33.4	24.3	22.9	5.2	15.4	*1.6	1.3	2.5	106.5	111.2	nca
<b>CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS QUARTER (%)</b>											
2019											
February	0.5	5.9	-2.6	-14.2	3.4	-20.5	-	-8.7	0.6	1.0	nca
May	-10.0	-7.3	-10.8	22.3	-15.9	9.5	15.7	0.4	-8.1	-2.5	nca
August	-6.1	2.4	17.2	-1.0	12.5	13.2	0.6	5.0	2.8	-2.5	nca
November	10.4	-1.8	0.5	-0.5	-3.9	-3.3	-18.4	3.4	2.2	1.0	nca
2020											
February	-1.1	-2.2	-1.8	5.6	7.9	-0.6	-31.1	-6.2	-0.7	-0.3	nca
May	-53.2	-54.8	-34.3	-48.1	-39.2	-46.6	-39.0	-48.8	-48.1	-45.0	nca
<b>CHANGE FROM CORRESPONDING QUARTER OF PREVIOUS YEAR (%)</b>											
2018											
May	10.5	47.2	19.1	5.5	22.5	-17.4	21.6	38.2	22.0	21.8	nca
2019											
May	2.1	-2.7	4.3	-3.2	5.7	42.8	11.7	-3.4	1.5	1.2	nca
2020											
May	-52.0	-55.5	-23.9	-46.0	-29.1	-41.8	-65.5	-47.8	-45.9	-46.0	nca

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

nca not currently available due to break in series

### 3 Job vacancies, public sector - states and territories

Original										Seasonally Adjusted	Trend
NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia	Australia	Australia	Australia
<b>JOB VACANCIES ('000)</b>											
2019											
February	6.7	5.3	2.8	1.5	1.6	0.5	0.5	1.8	20.6	21.3	nca
May	7.6	5.5	3.0	1.6	1.5	0.6	0.6	1.9	22.2	22.2	nca
August	7.5	5.3	3.8	1.8	2.0	0.6	*0.7	2.5	24.0	23.5	nca
November	8.0	5.2	3.6	1.9	2.2	0.7	0.5	2.5	24.7	24.4	nca
2020											
February	7.9	6.0	3.5	1.7	2.2	0.5	0.8	1.7	24.4	25.2	nca
May	6.3	4.4	2.3	1.6	*1.4	0.3	0.5	1.0	17.9	17.9	nca
<b>CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS QUARTER (%)</b>											
2019											
February	1.4	-12.3	-8.9	-2.3	-10.0	-1.1	-29.6	6.2	-5.7	-1.1	nca
May	13.8	4.9	9.1	5.2	-6.0	15.4	15.6	3.9	7.9	4.4	nca
August	-1.2	-4.3	24.2	14.6	30.2	2.2	19.7	30.6	8.0	5.9	nca
November	7.3	-0.8	-2.9	5.1	14.0	12.6	-25.4	-0.8	2.7	3.5	nca
2020											
February	-1.0	14.4	-3.6	-12.1	0.3	-27.7	63.0	-30.0	-1.2	3.3	nca
May	-20.2	-26.1	-34.3	-2.7	-37.1	-40.8	-41.5	-38.8	-26.5	-28.9	nca
<b>CHANGE FROM CORRESPONDING QUARTER OF PREVIOUS YEAR (%)</b>											
2018											
May	-3.0	4.9	13.2	45.4	14.3	53.9	22.8	29.6	9.3	9.5	nca
2019											
May	22.1	3.1	-2.7	16.3	-18.7	0.3	3.1	17.7	7.9	7.8	nca
2020											
May	-16.3	-19.8	-23.7	2.9	-6.4	-50.7	-14.9	-44.5	-19.4	-19.4	nca

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

nca not currently available due to break in series

## 4 Job vacancies, industry - original

	February 2019	May 2019	August 2019	November 2019	February 2020	May 2020
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000
Mining	5.8	5.6	6.4	6.2	6.5	4.3
Manufacturing	12.2	11.5	11.6	10.9	12.2	7.0
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	1.9	2.0	2.2	1.8	2.1	1.6
Construction	19.3	15.7	14.9	16.6	16.6	8.3
Wholesale trade	9.4	9.3	10.4	11.8	12.6	6.5
Retail trade	20.8	19.0	22.1	24.8	18.9	11.4
Accommodation and food services	16.7	14.0	14.5	14.5	14.7	*5.0
Transport, postal and warehousing	6.9	6.6	6.4	7.1	7.5	3.3
Information media and telecommunications	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.3	3.4	2.0
Financial and insurance services	12.4	11.4	12.1	11.0	11.9	7.8
Rental, hiring and real estate services	4.1	3.8	4.1	2.7	3.2	*1.0
Professional, scientific and technical services	28.3	28.6	25.0	23.7	26.3	13.1
Administrative and support services	33.1	30.7	34.2	34.5	31.2	17.5
Public administration and safety	11.1	11.9	13.2	12.9	13.3	8.6
Education and training	7.4	7.1	6.6	7.3	7.7	3.6
Health care and social assistance	29.4	29.8	27.4	28.0	29.8	19.7
Arts and recreation services	3.2	2.4	3.6	2.8	2.0	**0.1
Other services	10.0	7.2	9.0	11.4	9.4	*3.6

\* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution

\*\* estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use

## Spotlight - COVID-19 impacts on job vacancies

Job vacancies decreased by 43.2%, or by 98,200 vacancies in the three months to May 2020 (seasonally adjusted). A fall of this scale is unprecedented in the history of the series, and reflect the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions on people and businesses, most of which were still in effect on Friday 15 May 2020 (the survey reference date).

The Job Vacancies series, which began in May 1979, enables direct comparisons of the impact of COVID-19 on job vacancies with earlier economic shocks, such as the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s. The survey was unfortunately suspended for five quarters during the Global Financial Crisis.

As can be seen in the chart below, the current pandemic has resulted in a much steeper decrease in job vacancies than previous downturns measured by the Job Vacancies series. Based on other leading indicators such as job advertisements series, the downturn is also

much steeper than what is expected would have been measured by the series during the Global Financial crisis, had it not been suspended at this time. The largest single quarter decline in the 1980s recession was 18.6% (in May 1982) and was 26.7% in the 1990s recession (in November 1990).

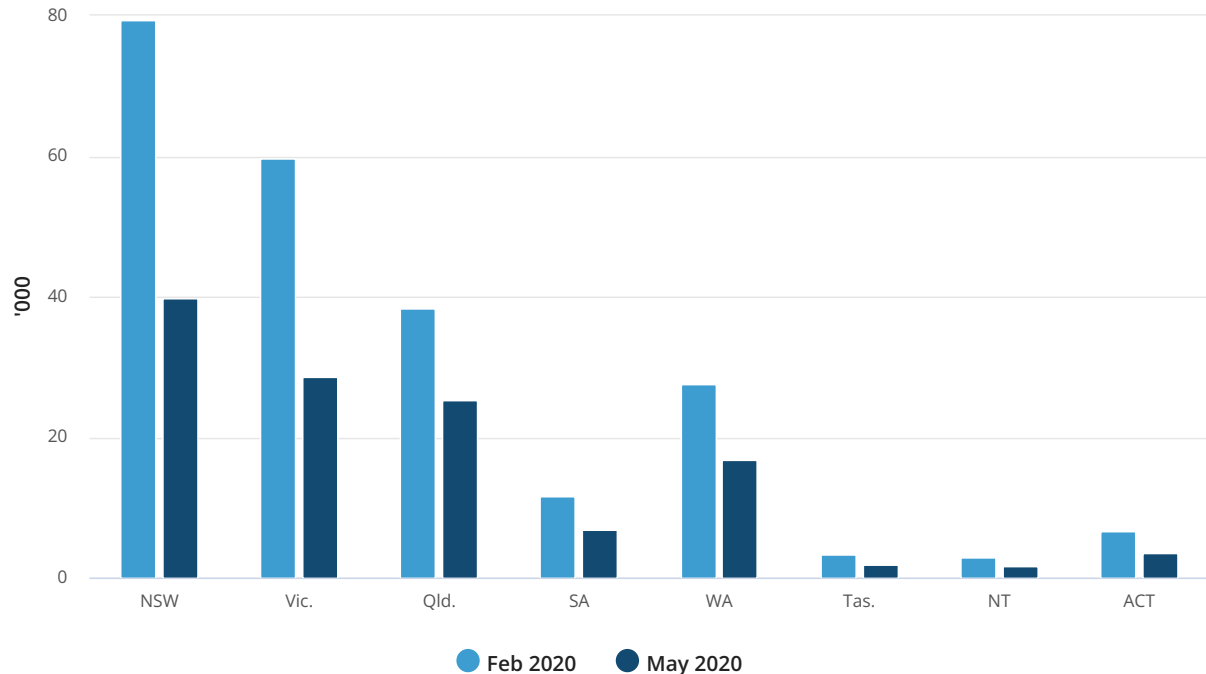
## Job vacancies, Australia - seasonally adjusted



All states and territories recorded substantial decreases in job vacancies in May 2020. The fall was greatest in Victoria (down 51.9%) and lowest in Queensland (down 34.3%) in original terms.



## Job vacancies, states comparison during COVID-19 - original



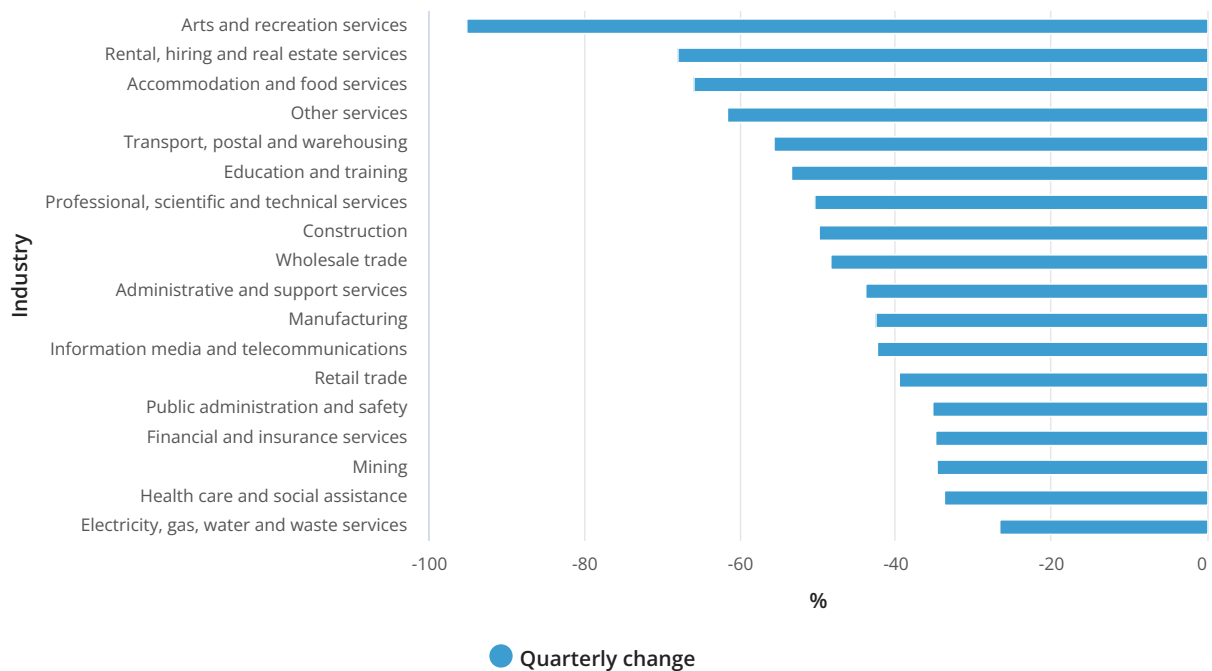
The impact was more pronounced in the private sector, which fell by 45.0% (in seasonally adjusted terms), compared to a 28.9% decrease in the public sector. Over a quarter of public sector job vacancies in May 2020 were in the Health care and social assistance industry.

Services industries that were exposed to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions showed corresponding large decreases in job vacancies. Arts and recreation services recorded a 95.2% drop in vacancies (in original terms), reflecting the closures of venues such as casinos, theatres, fitness centres, sporting grounds and zoos, and cancellations of events due to social distancing requirements. The next greatest decreases in job vacancies were seen in Rental, hiring and real estate (67.9%) and Accommodation and food services (65.9%).

Electricity, gas, water and waste services saw the smallest percentage decrease in job vacancies in the May quarter, partly reflecting increased demand for waste collection, disposal, and associated cleaning services.

All industries in scope of the survey recorded decreases in job vacancies in both quarterly and annual terms.

### Job vacancies, quarterly change by industry - original



While not a standard output from the survey, a measure of how many businesses reporting any vacancies also shows the extent of the acute reduction in labour demand in May 2020. A smaller proportion of businesses reported any job vacancies in May 2020 (6.5%), compared with either the previous quarter (11.0%) or the same time last year (11.9%). It is important to remember that most small businesses usually report zero vacancies, and they represent the vast majority of businesses in the Australia.

### Proportion of business reporting vacancies

	May 2019	Feb 2020	May 2020
Mining	9.6%	20.9%	8.3%
Manufacturing	10.8%	8.0%	4.4%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	9.9%	10.2%	11.8%
Construction	12.0%	13.6%	4.6%
Wholesale trade	12.9%	14.6%	14.1%
Retail trade	15.3%	13.3%	9.7%
Accommodation and food services	15.2%	14.5%	2.3%
Transport, postal and warehousing	8.0%	5.3%	4.1%
Information media and telecommunications	13.0%	14.0%	7.0%
Financial and insurance services	3.0%	4.5%	5.0%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	10.5%	6.9%	4.1%
Professional, scientific and technical services	13.2%	9.4%	9.2%
Administrative and support services	13.9%	16.5%	7.8%
Public administration and safety	21.1%	31.3%	22.6%
Education and training	11.8%	7.5%	4.0%
Health care and social assistance	12.3%	8.2%	6.5%
Arts and recreation services	4.4%	3.4%	0.5%
Other services	8.6%	10.6%	5.6%
<b>All Industries</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>

Job vacancies statistics are a measure of unmet demand for labour within the economy. They are used as a leading indicator of employment growth, with changes in job vacancies often preceding changes in a range of labour market indicators. The current drop in labour demand, driven by restrictions to halt the spread of COVID-19, has been unusually sudden in its onset and its relationship with other indicators is likely to be different during this period.

For more information, email [labour.statistics@abs.gov.au](mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au).

## Spotlight - comparing job vacancies with other measures of labour demand

A vacant job is sometimes described as an 'empty seat' - where an employer is actively looking for someone to perform specific tasks; tasks that are both needed and would be underway if a suitable person had been identified and was available. As such, job vacancies are a key indicator of unmet labour demand and a leading indicator of employment.

Job vacancies data can be combined with employment, unemployment, labour force participation and hours worked information to understand the pace and direction of changes in the Australian labour market.

The ABS Job Vacancies Survey (JVS) is collected directly from a sample of employers, and includes all positions:

- available for immediate filling on the reference date;
- paid through the payroll of the selected business (e.g. excludes contractors);

- greater than 1 day's duration;
- available to external applicants (e.g. excludes those only available to existing employees and those only available to existing employees in the relevant public service); and
- where recruitment action has been taken. This includes advertising on-site or online (including within social media applications), notifying an employment agency or trade union, and contacting applicants already registered with the organisation.

Other, non-ABS measures use alternative concepts to capture information about job vacancies and are also widely used as leading indicators of employment. Prominent examples include the ANZ Job Advertisement Series, the SEEK Employment Report, and the Department of Education, Skills and Employment Internet Vacancy Index.

The specific and longstanding scope and definitions that underpin the ABS Job Vacancies Survey will result in data that differs from the counts of job advertisements – given its more holistic focus on vacancies. For example, JVS includes jobs that are only advertised within social media platforms, those not advertised online, and counts every position advertised within a single notice.

The sudden changes in the labour market, as a result of COVID-19, may lead to further changes in how employers undertake recruitment actions and how people search for jobs. These will continue to be captured by Job Vacancies Survey into the future.

For more information on the concept of job vacancies, and differences with job advertisements, refer to the Job Vacancies chapter of [Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/6102.0.55.001) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/PrimaryMainFeatures/6102.0.55.001>) (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001), or email [labour.statistics@abs.gov.au](mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au).

## **Spotlight - job vacancies survey methods during COVID-19**

This spotlight outlines the impacts of the COVID-19 period on data collection and processing for the Job Vacancies Survey (JVS) May 2020 cycle, which had a reference date of Friday 15 May 2020.

### **No changes to questions or concepts**

No changes were made to survey questions relating to published data items, and concepts remain consistent with previous cycles. The survey measures vacancies that are both (1) available for immediate filling on the reference date and (2) for which recruitment action has been taken.

### **High response**

Target response rates were achieved nationally, as well as for each state and industry. To accurately account for the small number of businesses unable to respond this cycle, the existing JVS imputation processes were refined to incorporate JobKeeper information.

## **Changes to time series methods**

Consistent with other ABS measures of labour market activity, the JVS trend series have been suspended until more certainty emerges in the underlying trend in job vacancies estimates over the COVID-19 period. Existing spreadsheets containing trend, seasonally adjusted and original data will continue to be published in the same format, however trend columns will be annotated 'not currently available due to break in time series', in line with other labour statistics releases.

During the COVID-19 period, the ABS will use forward seasonal factors to produce seasonally adjusted job vacancies estimates at the Australia level and for the public sector. Forward factor adjustments are generally better suited to managing large movements at the end point of a series and ensure that large movements do not have a disproportionate influence on the seasonal factors. Due to a non-seasonal span in the private sector series, the forward factor approach is not considered suitable and the concurrent adjustment method was retained for this series. For a more detailed discussion on the implications of unusual events on time series, see [When it's not "business-as-usual": Implications for ABS Time Series \(https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1350.0Feature%20Article1Aug%202009?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1350.0&issue=Aug%202009&num=&view=\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/1350.0Feature%20Article1Aug%202009?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1350.0&issue=Aug%202009&num=&view=)).

## **Changes in relative standard errors**

The dramatic change in the number of job vacancies in the May 2020 cycle was also reflected in Relative Standard Error (RSE) increases, especially for the smaller industry divisions. This reflects the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 period, with extreme reductions in vacancies within the economy, rather than a reduction in the measurement precision of estimates.

## **Further information on methods**

Additional information can be found in the Methodology for this release, or at [labour.statistics@abs.gov.au](mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au).

## **Inquiries**

For further information about these and related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070. The [ABS Privacy Policy \(https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/Home/Privacy?opendocument\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/Home/Privacy?opendocument) outlines how the ABS will handle

any personal information that you provide to us.

## Data downloads

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Table 1. Job vacancies, states and territories ('000)

↓ [Download XLS](#)  
[298.5 KB]

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Table 2. Job vacancies, private sector, states and territories ('000)

↓ [Download XLS](#)  
[428.5 KB]

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Table 3. Job vacancies, public sector, states and territories ('000)

↓ [Download XLS](#)  
[271.5 KB]

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Table 4. Job vacancies, industry, Australia ('000) - original

↓ [Download XLS](#)  
[136.5 KB]

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## Previous catalogue number

This release previously used catalogue number 6354.0.

## Methodology

[Job Vacancies, Australia methodology, May 2020](#)